



SEPTEMBER 2006

A REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

## alaska native policy center

The Alaska Native Policy Center, a project of the First Alaskans Institute, was created in response to the need for a greater Native voice in the public policy-making process.

*The mission of the Policy Center is to provide Native leaders with the best available knowledge in order that Alaska Natives be proactively involved in - and influence - the educational, economic and social policy issues that impact our future as 21st century indigenous peoples.*

The Policy Center is currently working to expand its ability to provide information and data on Alaska Natives at the statewide and regional levels. This kind of information can be used as a tool in developing and measuring the impact of policies and programs. Current projects include updates to the *Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators*

Reports and the development of a framework of measures that link economic growth and poverty reduction.

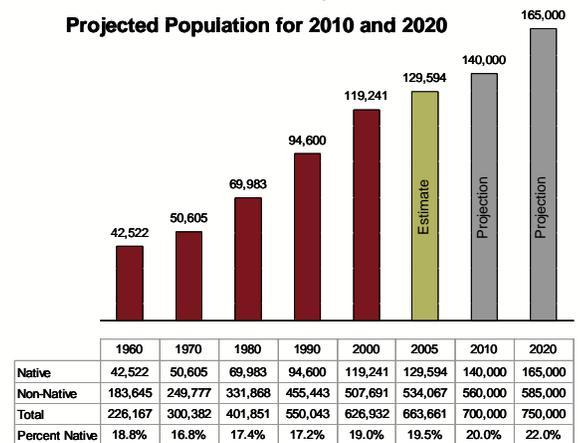
The Policy Center is also developing a *Getting Behind the Numbers* initiative. Its purpose is to answer questions raised by the data, to develop a research and analysis capacity in the Native community and to build leadership and networks within the field of research and analysis in our communities. Some of the current projects are highlighted on page 3.

Please visit our website and give us your feedback as we continue to develop these programs. We want to provide information such as reports, presentations and discussions that will be useful to your work.

For more information on the Alaska Native Policy Center, please visit [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).

### Alaska Native and non-Native Population, 1960-2005

#### Projected Population for 2010 and 2020



Source: ISER, Status of Alaska Natives Report, 2004, pages 2-7; US Census Bureau & Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis, Demographics Unit (Vintage 2005 Population Estimates).

### Alaska Native Population Trends



## congratulations interns!

In last month's newsletter, you were introduced to 31 people who participated in First Alaskans Institute's summer internship program. We are pleased to report that they have completed the program! We wish to thank our many partners – employers, presenters, funders, and collaborators! With your support, the internship pro-

gram is helping to develop the next generation of leaders for healthy and thriving communities.

In one of the leadership sessions, the Alaska Native Policy Center at First Alaskans Institute presented information on Alaska Native population, economics, health and education (continued on page 2)

## alaska native k-12 education indicators report

The Alaska Native Policy Center at First Alaskans Institute will soon release the 3rd edition of the *Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators* report. This report provides a unique look at Alaska Native student achievement, in comparison with all other ethnicities, statewide and by ANCSA geographic regions.

It helps us understand what is happening in our regions by providing information on edu-

cation performance. It is intended to help identify the areas where we can work together to make sure our children are getting the education they need to live and work in our communities.

The report provides information on attendance, enrollment, educator ethnicity and turnover rates, Standards Based Assessment scores, dropout and graduation rates, and GED data. This report covers the 2004-2005

school year and shows that:

- 132,899 total students were enrolled, 32,278 students were Alaska Native (24.3%).
- The region with the greatest number of Alaska Native students is Cook Inlet region with 8,243 or 11% of the total student enrollment of 74,028. (continued on page 2)

early bird registration: due September 30 [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org)

Elders and Youth Conference on October 23 & 24, 2006 at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage, AK

## message from the president

This month, our newsletter highlights the work of the Alaska Native Policy Center, a project of First Alaskans Institute.

The Policy Center is a Native "think tank" that uses social science research, published in understandable formats, to connect with Alaska's public policy process. It further provides Native leaders and other policymakers with information as a tool for decision-making at local, regional and statewide levels.

Current projects of the Policy Center include updates to the *Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators Reports* and development of measurements that link economic growth to poverty reduction in rural Alaska.

The Policy Center also develops the capacities of individual Natives, especially young leaders, to conduct research and analysis on the educational, economic and social policy issues that impact our futures.

We are also developing a *Getting Behind the Numbers* effort in order to explain what the patterns of data mean in real lives of Native people and their communities.

I welcome your comments on what we are doing to achieve the goal of healthy Native communities in Alaska! My direct phone line is 677-1704, and email is [janie@firstalaskans.org](mailto:janie@firstalaskans.org).




**Janie Leask**  
President

## interns...

The interns learned that by the year 2020, the Native population in Alaska is predicted to number 165,000. Of that number, 63,000 people are predicted to be 19 years of age or younger. They also learned that a 30 percent gap in academic performance exists between Alaska Natives and all other students in our state right now.

Education is highly valued by Natives as documented in *A Survey of Native Perspectives on Alaska Issues* (McDowell, 2003). The same report tells us that Natives are con-

cerned with the performance of Alaska's schools in preparing their students for high school, college, the workplace and life in the community.

As our interns return to their schools and communities, we are confident that they will take the lessons they have learned and work collaboratively with leaders, school board members, parents, teachers, universities, policy makers, and businesses, to positively impact their communities.

### On the cover:

Summer Interns 2006 hosted an End of the Season Celebration dinner on Thursday, August 10, 2006 at the Alaska Pacific University Atwood Building.

Interns, mentors, partner companies, families and other special guests attended the celebration dinner.

The theme was *Tomorrow's Leaders: Embracing today's challenges, standing together through change*.

For more information on the Summer Internship Program, please visit [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).

## K-12 continued ...

- The district with the highest percentage of Alaska Native students is Calista at 96.0 % or (7,003 Alaska Native students out of total of 7,294 students).
- 5,648 out of 18,140 students classified as having disabilities were Alaska Native (31.1%).
- There were 8,399 total educators: 52 superintendents, 338 principals, and 8,009 teachers.
- Of the 8,399 educators, 390 were

- Alaska Native (4.6%).
- Educator turnover was 17.8% state-wide, with the lowest teacher turnover in Cook Inlet at 14.2%, and the highest teacher turnover in Bering Straits at (41.6%).
- Of 501 public schools evaluated for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) 292 made AYP. 203 did not, and six were not evaluated.
- In reading, writing and math, the percentage of Alaska Native students who

scored at the 'proficient' level was consistently lower than that of all other ethnicities.

In our continued efforts to inform and raise awareness of education issues, First Alaskans invites you to participate in an Alaska Native education dialogue during the AFN Convention on Wednesday, October 25, 2006, from 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm.

For more information on the Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicator reports) visit our website at [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).

## current projects

The Alaska Native Policy Center at First Alaskans is working on a *Rural Development Performance Measures (RDPM)* project to design and test a system of measures that links economic growth to poverty reduction.

The Policy Center is holding a series of discussions to get feedback from rural residents in order to determine what poverty,

well-being, and economic growth mean to them. This input will help to shape a measurement system.

The Policy Center will also be working with individuals and organizations through a project team to develop a measures system so that this system will reflect the goals of local communities.

For more on the RDPM please visit [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).

## leadership development

I have become increasingly aware of the truth in the old saying "Knowledge is Power". I have also seen that it can make a difference only when shared with others. Real power, I discovered, is knowledge that is communicated to others.

During one Leadership Friday session, I shared with my fellow interns what I learned at college about public speaking. Our goal was to become more confident as public speakers. We did this, but most rewarding was seeing their passions come through, which were just below the surface waiting to be articulated. Sharing with my peers a

valuable tool that I learned made me realize the sacrifice in studying away is worth it.

Throughout the Summer Internship I have been creating a literature review on *Healthy Community Initiatives* to better understand well-being and measures of progress toward shared visions and goals. The goal is to provide information to decision-makers on healthy communities for action strategies to meet the needs of Alaska Native people.

—Dewey Hoffman, Intern  
*Alaska Native Policy Center*



## getting behind the numbers...



### ***Getting Behind the Numbers: Defining Alaska Native Student Success***

*Malia Villegas,  
2006 Senior Intern  
Alaska Native Policy Center*



*Rebecca Prieto,  
2005 Intern  
Alaska Native Policy Center*

In 2005, two Summer Interns, Malia Villegas and Rebecca Prieto, interviewed 45 Alaska Native community leaders and advocates about student success.

Interns asked how these leaders and advocates define success, what students need to know to be successful, and who is responsible to support student success. Responses indicated that success is neither individual nor communal, that a successful Alaska Native student is one who understands his/her own worth *and* his/her responsibility to contribute.

The *Alaska Native Student Vitality Reports'*

findings includes examples of effective initiatives and student and community indicators of success beyond test scores, high school graduation rates and dropout rates.

This work "gets behind the numbers" by identifying community expectations to measure and support student success more effectively. The report highlights the importance of community-school dialogue about shared expectations for student success.

Preliminary findings have been shared at national and international conferences, and the full report will be available soon on the First Alaskans website at [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).



### ***Getting Behind the Numbers: Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators Report***

*Helena Batman,  
2006 Intern  
Alaska Native Policy Center*

Working with the Policy Center team to publish the *2006 Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators* report has allowed me to read, understand and provide feedback on the report from many perspectives: parent, Alaska Native, student, and educator.

Because this is the third report, we can begin to see trends, make comparisons, and initiate solutions that can transform education outcomes for Alaska Natives. I have learned that in order to make change, the data need to be provided and compiled in a way that is easy to read and are straight-forward. Issues can then

be identified so that solutions can be brainstormed and progress can be made.

Knowing and understanding the data set forth by the Alaska Native education indicators has given me a new perspective as a new teacher, as a parent, and as an Alaska Native citizen. I plan to stay involved in education issues, projects and planning in order to be a part of positive change for Alaska's students.

For more on the *Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators Report*, please visit [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).

### **High School Dropout Rate, Malia Villegas, 2006 Senior Intern**

As a result of presentations on the *Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators* report, the Policy Center has received many questions about the high school dropout rate and what efforts are being taken to address it. To address these questions, the Policy Center is working on a report in which we ask: **1)** How is the dropout rate formulated and what does it tell us?; **2)** What are the factors that contribute to a student's decision to leave school?; and **3)** What is being done to encourage students to stay in school?

For more information, please visit [www.firstalaskans.org](http://www.firstalaskans.org).

## alaska native education facts at a glance, 2004-2005 school year

Number of School Districts	54	
Number of K-12 Schools	500	
Statewide Educator Turnover Rate	17.8%	
	<b>Alaska Native</b>	<b>All Other Ethnicities</b>
Number of students enrolled in Alaska Public Schools	32,278	100,621
Percent of total enrollments	24.3 %	75.7 %
High School Graduation Rate	43.3 %	67.3 %
Drop Out Rate (grades 7-12, 2003-2004)	7.8 %	3.9 %
Number of Educators	390	8,009
	<b>Total</b>	
Number of schools making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)	292 *	
Number of schools not making AYP	203	

\* 501 schools were included in the AYP evaluation. Six of the 501 schools were not evaluated due to various reasons.



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*In Memoriam:*  
**Morris Thompson**  
(Tanana Athabaskan)  
Our Friend and Colleague

### *In the photo*

**First row, left to right:** Paneen Petersen, Helena Batman (Intern) and Sarah Scanlan

**Second row, left to right:** Nancy Wesson, Trina Landlord and Memry Dahl

**Third row, left to right:** Sarah Sherry and Krista Anderson

**Fourth row, left to right:** Janie Leask, George Irvin, Greta Goto and Chris Kolerok

We invite you to tell us what you think of the work we are doing and the content of this newsletter. We value your feedback and advice. If you have comments, please contact:

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